

CSPD ARTICLE

JUST SOME CSPD FOOD FOR THOUGHT FROM
OUR GOOD FRIEND, KARL MURRAY

What Is the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development?

An Interview with Karl Murray, Director of the National Institute for CSPD Collaboration

What is CSPD?

Special education law has required states to have comprehensive systems of personnel development (CSPD) since 1975. Each state must develop a system to ensure that all education personnel are adequately prepared and receive continuing education. This helps teachers by ensuring that they are trained to do their work and guards against serious personnel shortages.

Why was the National Institute for CSPD Collaboration needed?

Since 1990, the National Institute for CSPD Collaboration at CEC has provided technical assistance to states in organizing and maintaining their staff preparation and development efforts through strategic planning.

Most states had extensive personnel development activities, but few had a comprehensive system that addressed all the parts of a CSPD. Many states lack communication between the state educational agency (SEA), the local educational agency, and colleges and universities concerning the skills that teachers and related services providers need. This is particularly true with respect to changing demographics and issues such as drugs, violence, and other problems teachers face daily.

By establishing state leadership committees for CSPD, we hope to encourage colleges and universities to conduct more field-based research in the schools and to use that information to guide them in determining what to teach. Also, because many colleges train general and special educators in separate programs, new teachers may have trouble adjusting to a more inclusive school environment.

In planning within states, we found

that many local districts would rather emphasize inservice training than work with the colleges and universities to change preservice programs. While we all need continuous inservice training to stay up-to-date, preservice education is where we should acquire the skills to do our jobs. SEAs, colleges and universities, and local districts need to create and maintain collaborative partnerships in teacher training.

CSPD involves university training, in-service education, parent training, and related services. The Institute helps states create collaborative partnerships of ALL of the groups in a state that are involved in teaching and providing educational services.

What groups constitute the audiences for your training?

Most of the teams involve 10 to 15 people, including the state director of special education or the assistant state director, the CSPD coordinator for Part B (state grants) and Part H (early childhood), a representative from university training programs, and a school administrator who has special education classes on campus. Other attendees are parents, vocational rehabilitation representatives, and preservice teacher trainers.

Why does the training focus on strategic planning?

Strategic planning involves developing a vision statement to guide change; scanning the environment to see what influences can be expected to affect the outcomes of the change process; assessing problems and opportunities; and developing goals, objectives and strategies. The Institute also helps states develop a multiyear implementation plan and an interim work plan.



Strategic planning differs from long-range planning in that it brings additional information to the process. We develop a vision of what the future will look like and where the state wants to take its personnel development efforts. Strategic planning requires that all stakeholders be at the table, and it requires prioritizing goals and objectives. Strategic planning also involves monitoring, evaluation, and revision of the plan. When people use long-range planning, they often skip the monitoring and evaluation and scrap the original plan to develop a new one. Strategic planning provides an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments and review priorities.

A strategic plan belongs to all stakeholders—if it is criticized, you find out how to fix it. It can take a while to develop a vision that everyone can live with. Teams come to a consensus and share the ownership of the plan with others.

What has the Institute accomplished in the 5 years it has been in operation?

We have provided CSPD training to 40 states and 4 territories and have trained another 10 or 15 states in planning for Part H CSPD. We have worked with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Navajo Nation. And, we have run joint partnership seminars in 40 states with the American Occupational Therapy Association to promote collaboration between occupational therapists and CSPD planners.

What do you think of the CSPD provisions?

CSPD was the most significant part of PL. 94-142. The regulations called for sweeping changes in how we collaborate in professional development. But these changes were not speci-

cally funded and did not receive the national and state leadership required to be successful. In order for CSPD to work, the federal government must fund state plans for personnel development based on collaborative partnerships, not competition. •

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